



Rhode Island

Livestock Welfare & Care Standards Advisory Council

Rhode Island Livestock Welfare and Care Standards Advisory Council Minutes of Meeting March 4, 2016 @ 1:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Dr. Scott Marshall, Chair, State Veterinarian
Louis Vinagro
Christie Smith, Potter League
Dr. Rick Rhodes, URI
Joe Warzycha, RISPCA
Lyn Spinella, Secretary, RI Farm Bureau

Members Absent:

Debora Bresch, ASPCA

Guests:

Margaret Sweeney, National Pork Producers
Jan Martin, Northeast Organic Farming Association of RI

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. by Chairman Marshall.

Minutes: Motion by Mr. Warzycha to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Dr. Rhodes seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business: Dr. Marshall discussed House Bill 7324 regarding egg-laying hens and his testimony as to the science of the issue at the House hearing. Motion by Christie Smith to add this item to the agenda for discussion. Seconded by Dr. Rhodes. Motion passed. Dr. Marshall gave an overview of the bill and his testimony. DEM will render a written opinion to the General Assembly.

Dr. Marshall indicated that he had prepared a draft of the regulations for livestock welfare which have been reviewed and approved by DEM legal. The draft regulations were circulated among the members prior to the meeting. Christie Smith indicated that the euthanasia method discussed in the draft should be modified to read "most current."

Dr. Marshall stated that age was an issue in some cases such as dehorning and castration, however, he referenced the recommendations from the AVMA website which is the current standard.

The process for promulgating regulations would hold a stakeholder meeting after which the document would go back to legal with any major changes or modifications. Then the document would be submitted to the Office of Regulatory Review where they have a 30 day turn around. After that, a 30 day public comment period would be required. A public hearing could happen upon the request of 25 individuals. After the 30 day comment period, changes can be made or not made or the decision could be made to start over from scratch. After any changes are made, the document goes back to the Office of Regulatory Review for another 30 day turn around after which

the regulations are filed with the Secretary of State. They become effective 20 days after filing. All tolled, the process can take anywhere from 50 to 110 days.

A discussion took place regarding the definition of restraint as used on page 5 section 2(c), tethering on page 8 as it relates to veal calves, and confinement as it relates to horses on page 20. It was determined that a proper definition might be needed to clarify these terms. Dr. Marshall indicated that not all forms of restraint are actionable with an arrest unless the animal is living in filth. He stated further that he considered restraint to be a temporary situation for a veterinary procedure or husbandry where tethering would be a more permanent situation. Exercise for horses confined to their stalls was discussed. It was determined that the paragraph should be modified to indicate "exercise necessary to maintain the health of the animal."

SPCA enforcement procedures were discussed and how these regulations would sync with their procedures. There are no provisions for enforcement or inspection or the landowner's right to privacy as it pertains to inspections. Christie Smith indicated that police have enforcement authority with dogs and cats for criminal activity. Dr. Marshall explained that these regulations are administrative. However, livestock is exempt from criminal prosecution under these regulations. Dr. Marshall suggested that the pathway for prosecution should be separated between administrative and criminal but both tools could be used.

The regulations addressing battery cages for egg-laying hens was then discussed. Dr. Marshall informed the group that industry standards dictate 76 square inches for each bird. Little Rhody Farm/Eli Berkowitz is at 86 square inches per bird. The Rhode Island standards mandate 116 square inches per bird. It was noted that Rhode Island is one of four states with standards that high. Humane Society of the US is lobbying for 216 square inches per bird which is what is required for "cage free" animals. Dr. Marshall discussed the benefits of having caged birds such as lower mortality rates, exposure to fewer diseases, avoidance of predators, free access to fresh water and nutritious feed and a climate controlled environment.

Dr. Rhodes moved to include the modifications discussed here today into the regulations. Mr. Warzycha seconded. Motion passed.

Mr. Warzycha moved that Dr. Marshall send a position paper to the General Assembly on House Bill 7324 asking them to adopt the standards that have been set by this Council. Dr. Rhodes seconded. Motion passed.

New Business: None.

Next Meeting: To be determined.

Adjournment: 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lyn A. Spinella, Secretary